

## **B. Public Access Goals**

General Goal No. 17 for Cambria and San Simeon Acres, described in Chapter 1 and repeated below, outlines several objectives for providing public access to the shoreline, without overburdening natural resources or infringing on constitutionally protected private property rights. The goal envisions the creation of a coastal trail and regional bike path system enabling residents and visitors to enjoy these segments of the California coastline.

### **General Goal No. 17 (from Chapter 1):**

**Public Access to the Shoreline.** Provide for public access, consistent with the need to protect natural resource areas from overuse, by:

- A.** Maximizing public access to and along the coast through the following:
  - 1.** Developing all feasible vertical and lateral pedestrian access easements to and along the shoreline, consistent with other public access goals of this plan;
  - 2.** Developing a Coastal Trail through the Communities;
  - 3.** Developing all other feasible pedestrian circulation systems in the coastal zone, consistent with other public access goals of this plan;
  - 4.** Providing a bike path system for the Planning Area;
  - 5.** Providing conspicuous signage for all public access easements;
- B.** Preventing interference with the public's right of access to the sea, whether acquired through use or legislative authorization, including, but not limited to, the use of dry sand and rocky coastal beaches to the first line of terrestrial vegetation.
- C.** Requiring new development between the nearest public roadway and the shoreline and along the coast to provide public access consistent with sound resource management and consistent with public safety, military security needs, and the protection of fragile coastal resources.
- D.** Carefully balancing the public's right of access to the sea with constitutionally protected private property rights. (Mod 6)

## **C. Overview of Existing and Potential Coastal Access**

The North Coast segment of San Luis Obispo County provides a wide variety of public access opportunities, including one state beach, and a variety of formal and informal accessways to the beach. Existing and potential accessways are discussed below and generally shown on Figures 8-1 and 8-2. An inventory of offers-to-dedicate lateral and vertical access to the beach is included at the end of this chapter in Section G. The exact location of a continuous coastal trail will evolve over time as potential segments are identified on public lands, and segments across private lands are voluntarily offered for dedication, sometimes in conjunction with development projects.

### **1. Cambria**

#### **Shamel County Park north to Leffingwell Landing**

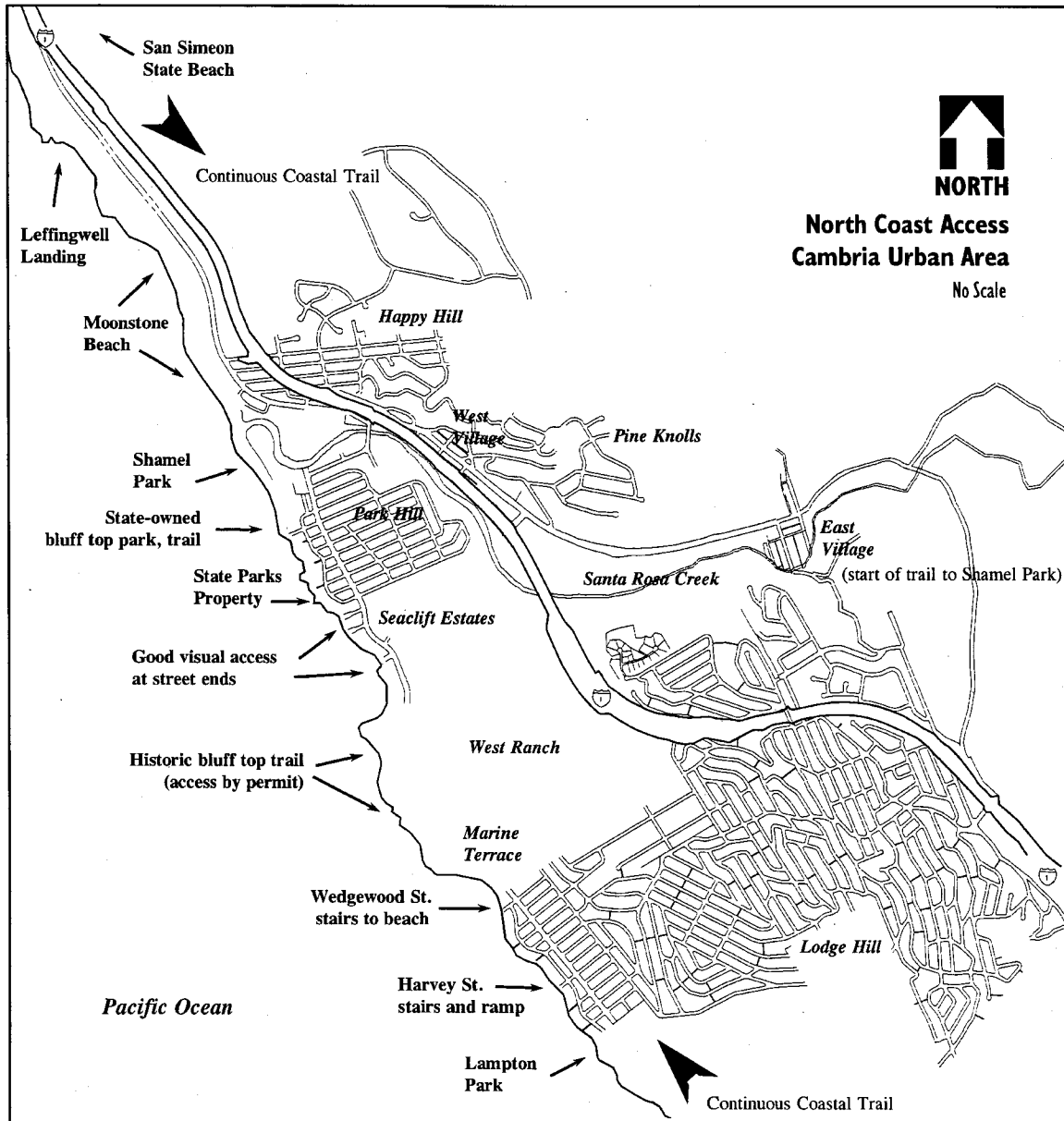
This contiguous sandy area is wide open for public use. This area is clearly visible from Moonstone Beach Drive, and there are numerous opportunities to view the beach and ocean. Parking, trails, and boardwalks are also available, as are restrooms at Santa Rosa Creek and Leffingwell Landing. There is also a boat launch at Leffingwell Landing. The adjacent inland uses are primarily visitor-serving motels. Overall, this area provides excellent access because the beach and coast are easily accessible for the whole length via Moonstone Drive, there is good visual access, and it is adjacent to many commercial visitor-serving uses (motels).

#### **Shamel County Park**

This County facility provides a developed lawn area with picnic tables, barbecues, restrooms, parking, and direct beach access. There is a large sandy beach contiguous with the State Park north from Shamel Park to Moonstone Beach and Leffingwell Landing.

#### **Park Hill**

Park Hill is primarily a residential area. The shoreline is generally accessible via cul-de-sac roads, but the coast is generally not visible from Highway One. The beaches here are small and seasonal, with little overall carrying capacity. Three southern street ends (Murray, Bryan, and DeVault) provide good visual overlooks, but no stairs. At the northern end of Park Hill a bluff top park containing pocket beaches has been improved with trails. This property is owned by State Parks, and extends from Worcester to just past Cambridge. A bluff top trail ends at the top of a 25-foot bluff, and access to Shamel Beach requires scrambling down the bluff face, raising concerns about safety and erosion. A stairway would be a useful improvement here.



**Figure 8-1 - Coastal Access - Cambria**

## **East/West Ranch**

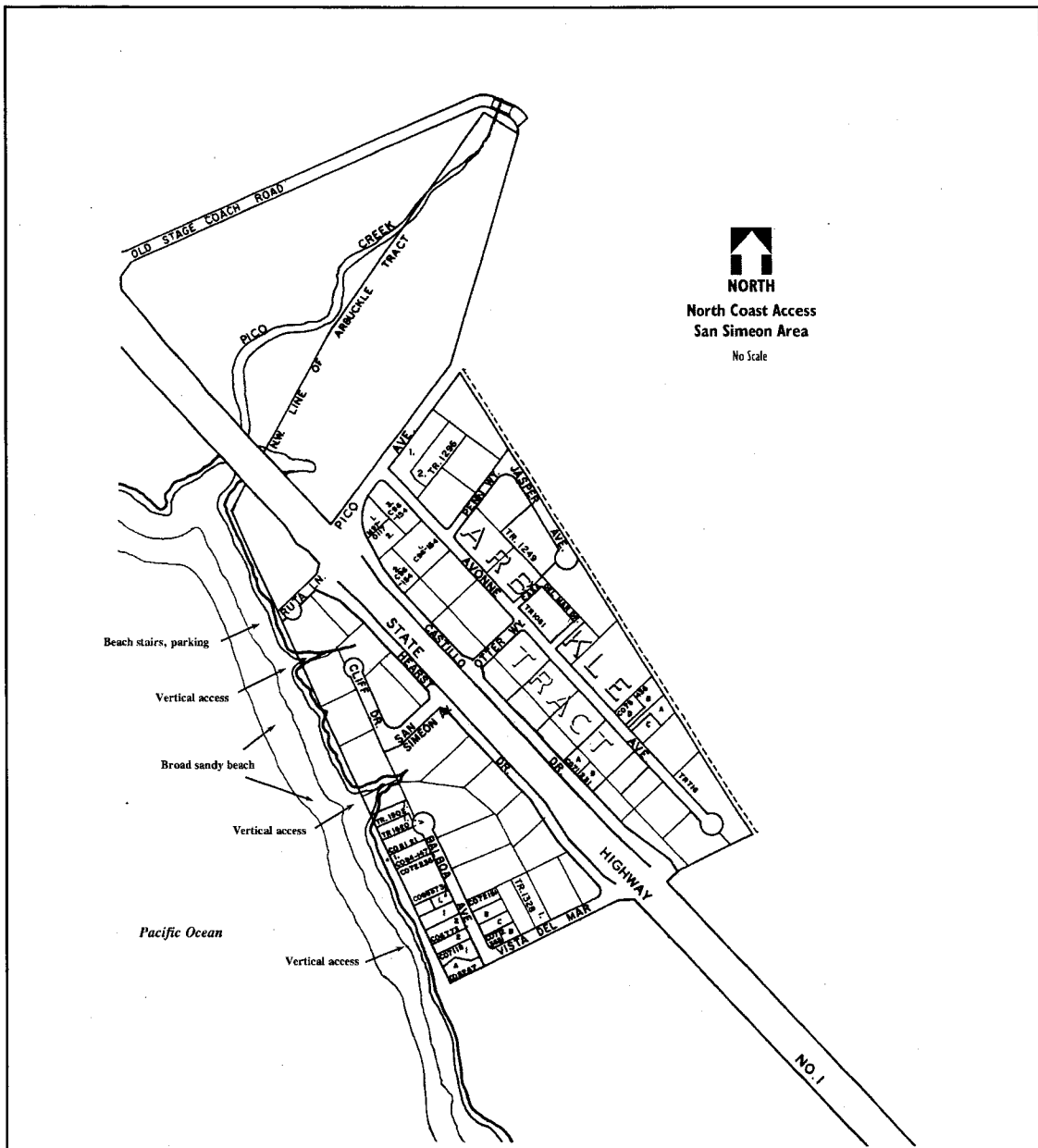
Lateral access along the West Ranch is currently provided, with entrances at the south and north from the end of Windsor Boulevard. An established trail system provides access to upland areas of the ranch. There is also potential for linking Cambria's East Village to the coastline via the Cross Town Trail.

## **Lodge Hill**

Because of the geographic configuration of this area, the many access options in Lodge Hill primarily serve neighborhood residents. Generally, the public is not drawn to this area, in part because the shoreline is not visible from Highway One (although access is signed on the Highway), and in part because access to the coast involves a circuitous route through local streets. The beaches here are small and seasonal, with very little capacity for public use. Of the six streets that end at or near the coast in Lodge Hill, three are currently developed with stairways. The three accessways are fairly well-spaced laterally, and one of the three, at Lampton County Park, has been improved with a parking lot, trails, a bike rack, and a stairway. The other stairways are located at Harvey and Wedgewood.

## **2. San Simeon Acres**

Access in San Simeon Acres is good – the highlight is a broad beach with excellent access. The main accessway to the beach is at the end of Pico Avenue, where parking for approximately ten cars and a stairway is located. There is a second accessway south of the Cavalier Inn that needs a conspicuous sign. There are also two vertical offers-to-dedicate at the southern end of the beach which should be analyzed for future development opportunities.



**Figure 8-2 - Coastal Access -San Simeon Acres**

## **D. Access Opportunities and Concepts.**

With increasing demand for access to the coast, additional public access easements will be necessary. Enhancement of existing access corridors will also be necessary to serve new user groups, or to provide better locations for accessways.

This Plan outlines several specific County programs for opening and managing existing and future accessways, and includes systematic documentation of historic public use of informal accessways. The following table outlines some of the more significant additions and enhancements envisioned in the coastal access program for Cambria and San Simeon Acres.

**Table 8-1**  
**Coastal Access Enhancement Objectives**

<b><u>Area</u></b>	<b><u>Improvement</u></b>	<b><u>Responsible Agency</u></b>
<u>Areawide</u>	<u>Urban Coastal Trail &amp; Highway One Bikeway, 2 small scale camping or hostel facilities</u>	<u>Cal Trans, State Dept of Parks and Recreation, County</u>
<u>NW San Simeon Acres</u>	<u>Roadside park or overlook</u>	<u>County or San Simeon Acres Community Services District (SSACSD)</u>
<u>San Simeon Acres</u>	<u>Pedestrian network linking East &amp; West sides, safer Highway crossing, and link to the beaches</u>	<u>County, SSACSD, or private land owners</u>
<u>Cambria: East Village to Shamel Park</u>	<u>Pedestrian and bicycle trail - "Crosstown Trail"</u>	<u>County, Cambria CSD, private land owners</u>
<u>Cambria: West Lodge Hill</u>	<u>Signs and walkways at end of Castle Street, Emmons Road, and Jean Street</u>	<u>County or other responsible agency</u>

### **1. Access Opportunity: The Coastal Trail & Bikeway.**

A Coastal Trail and Bikeway in Cambria and San Simeon Acres (as segments of a trail through the North Coast Planning Area) could provide significant access opportunities not currently available to the public. As envisioned in this Plan, the Coastal Trail and Bikeway would require support from the public as well as government agencies, in the form of landowner cooperation, significant funding, and more detailed planning. Agencies or organizations willing to accept offers-to-dedicate and manage segments of the trails must also be found.

The Coastal Trail and Bikeway are related since they would share the same purpose and location, but would serve different users. Because the Trail and Bikeway would be so

closely related, there is an opportunity to share management and improvement costs among agencies holding different segments in the public trust. Shared improvements might include right-of-way improvements, signage, overnight facilities such as campgrounds or hostels, and management facilities. Shared ongoing maintenance activities, equipment, and security might also be a possibility.

The following section outlines in general terms a vision for the development of the Coastal Trail and Bikeway. Prior to implementation, more detailed plans and environmental studies may be required.

## **A. The Coastal Trail**

- 1. Goals of Coastal Trail Development.** The goal of the Coastal Trail is to provide one continuous trail along the entire coast of the State of California. Regardless of whether or not the state-wide goal is met, however, segments in San Simeon Acres and Cambria could provide spectacular recreation opportunities not currently available to the public.

The County envisions integrating the Trail with existing trails, bikeways, parks, and existing and potential support facilities. In order to accomplish this, the Coastal Trail may include secondary trail loops.

- 2. The Users.** The Coastal Trail would primarily serve hikers, bikers, and equestrians. The use of secondary trails may be limited because of concerns about safety or compatibility with site-specific coastal resources. For example, segments of the Coastal Trail located close to wetlands or marine mammal habitat may be limited to hikers.

- 3. Precise Planning.** The Coastal Trail will require considerable cooperation and commitment from a variety of stakeholders. Once general support has been secured and potential funding sources have been identified, more detailed plans will need to be developed. The following sections outline some areas needing further study:

- a. Environmental Constraints.** A detailed environmental constraints study should be for the area between Highway One and the ocean. The study should identify and locate all sensitive resources, including environmentally sensitive habitat areas, prime soils, archeological and cultural resources, visual resources, and areas of geological hazards, such as steep slopes.
- b. Design of the Coastal Trail Alignment.** Using the results of the environmental constraints study, a trail alignment and cross

section should be developed that integrates the Trail with existing facilities and other access easements, and that discusses feasible alternatives. The public should be involved as much as possible in the design process. It is especially important that landowners, representatives of relevant government agencies, and other crucial stakeholders be involved in the process from the beginning.

**c. Public Comment.** Once the trail design and alternatives have been drafted, they should be presented to the general public for comments. The public comment period should determine the preferred alternative, and resolve any outstanding design issues. The outcome of this process should guide purchase programs.

**d. Final Design and Purchase.** A document describing the final design should be crafted, based on the preferred alternative. Upon completion of the final design, public and/or private agencies can be found to purchase the necessary land, and an agency can be approached about trail maintenance. Permitting can also go forward.

**e. Construction and Maintenance.** Final construction and formal opening of the Coastal Trail should follow the permitting phase. Maintenance of the Trail will be performed by the agency or organization which has accepted that responsibility.

**4. Support Facilities.** There are a number of facilities that will be necessary to support the Coastal Trail.

**a. Overnight accommodations.** Primary overnight facilities should be located in Cambria or San Simeon Acres.

**b. Staging Areas.** Several staging areas will be necessary to support vehicle parking, equestrian needs, and maintenance facilities.

**5. Trail Location & Alignment.** While much of the Coastal Trail could be located on the Highway One right-of-way, secondary trails will have to be purchased and developed if access to beaches, bluff over-looks, and other recreational areas is to be provided. Trails should avoid dangerous bluffs, streams, wetlands, environmentally sensitive habitat areas, and agricultural lands.



6. **Trail Design.** To provide maximum opportunities for access, the Trail should be designed as a multi-use trail. However, in some circumstances restrictions on certain types of use might be appropriate due to topography, environmental constraints, or the special needs of certain user groups. Where possible, trails should follow existing ranch roads or be located in areas that have already been disturbed.
7. **Management and Maintenance.** Management and maintenance should be consolidated in one agency, such as the State Department of Parks and Recreation. In some cases, trail use or overnight camping may be require a permit from the managing agency.

**B. Highway One Bikeway.** Portions of Highway One have already been improved as a Class II Bikeway. The vision of the Coastal Trail and Bikeway described above maintains this alignment, but adds improved secondary routes through scenic and special areas, such as Moonstone Beach and Cambria's downtown and overnight facilities. Support facilities for the Bikeway could be consolidated with those serving the Coastal Trail.

1. **Bikeway Purpose and Goals.** The purpose of the Bikeway is to enhance existing opportunities for bicycle recreation in the Planning Area. Like the Coastal Trail, the Bikeway should eventually constitute one continuous bikeway along the North Coast, with several Class I secondary routes providing access to special recreation areas. The goal is to integrate the Bikeway with existing trails, bike paths, parks, and existing and potential support facilities.
2. **The Users.** The Bikeway would primarily serve bicycle riders. The use of secondary trails may be limited because of concerns about safety or compatibility with site-specific coastal resources.
3. **The Planning Process.** The Bikeway, like the Coastal Trail, will require considerable cooperation and commitment from a variety of stakeholders. Once general support has been secured and potential funding sources have been identified, more detailed plans will need to be developed. The planning process should emphasize providing enhancements to existing routes, adding new routes to areas of interest, and combining support facilities with the Coastal Trail.

## **E. Management Objectives and Programs**

Management of coastal access areas is complicated by the many different types of access facilities and the number of responsible agencies involved. Accessways include undeveloped beaches, bluff top trails, beach stairs, highway pull-outs and vista points, parks, and overlooks. In the Planning Area, some accessways are managed by private land owners. Others may be managed by public agencies such as: Cambria Community Services District, San Simeon Acres Community Services District, CalTrans, County Department of General Services Parks Division, and the State Department of Parks and Recreation. Nonprofit organizations, such as the California Coastal Conservancy and the Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County, may also accept and manage coastal accessways.

The following management objectives are meant to support existing access and provide for new access opportunities in the Planning Area:

- 1. Existing Facilities.** Management organizations should continue to fund and support ongoing maintenance of existing facilities. Agencies should avoid losing land resources such as offers-of-dedication and other potential assets. Support facilities should be expanded to meet growing public demand and to meet the needs of new user groups.
- 2. Potential Access.** Management organizations should continue to look for ways to maximize coastal access by pursuing grants, donations, or other funding opportunities. Coordinating plans for existing facilities with plans for new facilities should provide a comprehensive and cost-effective approach. Agencies involved in development permit review should require access dedications according to adopted regulations.
- 3. Public Support.** The public should be involved as much as possible in providing input and resolving access issues. It is especially important that landowners, representatives of appropriate government agencies, and other crucial stakeholders be included from the beginning in relevant discussions.
- 4. Maintenance and Restoration.** Access easements must be maintained in order to provide for public safety and protection of sensitive coastal resources. Existing accessways that are significantly degraded because of overuse, or lack of funding to provide maintenance, should be rehabilitated, re-routed, or (if necessary) closed.
- 5. County of San Luis Obispo.** Where the County is the responsible agency, the Parks Manager, working in the Department of General Services, should continue to:
  - A.** Accept outstanding offers-to-dedicate vertical and lateral coastal access easements.

- B.**     Design and install access facilities such as parking lots, stairs, trash receptacles, restrooms, and signs.
- C.**     Maintain existing facilities.
- D.**     Manage the coastal access inventory.
- E.**     Evaluate coastal development proposals for coastal access potential.

In addition, the County is responsible for reviewing new development for consistency with the coastal access requirements in the Local Coastal Program. New development may be required to provide additional access in accordance with the Local Coastal Program and the California Coastal Act.

## **F. Coastal Access Policies, Standards, and Ordinances**

Because the entire Planning Area is within the coastal zone, land use and development within this area is subject to provisions of the County's Local Coastal Program, which are contained in four documents: *Land Use Element and Local Coastal Plan - Framework for Planning*; *Land Use Element and Local Coastal Plan - Coastal Plan Policies*; *North Coast Area Plan*; and *Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance*. These documents work together to implement the Local Coastal Program. They are available from the San Luis Obispo County Department of Planning and Building. The basis for the Local Coastal Program and a brief description of each component are provided below. The following is included for reference purposes only as they are adopted separately and may be changed from time to time.

### **The California Coastal Act**

Policies in the California Coastal Act of 1976 guide the conservation and development of California's 1,100 mile coastline with the goal of protecting California's coastal resources and providing for their wise use. The Act establishes the California Coastal Commission as a permanent State coastal management and regulatory agency and requires each of the state's coastal cities and counties to adopt a long-term management plan, known as a Local Coastal Program. Each Local Coastal Program consists of a land use plan, zoning ordinances and other implementing actions. In enacting the Coastal Act, the legislature declared that a basic goal of the state for the coastal zone is to:

Maximize public access to and along the coast and maximize recreational opportunities in the coastal zone consistent with sound resource conservation principles and constitutionally protected rights of private property owners.  
(Section 30001.5)

Chapter 3, Article 2 (Sections 30210 through 30214) of the Coastal Act contains six policy sections addressing public access and development between the first public road and the shoreline. The full text of applicable public access policies from the Coastal Act is included in Chapter 2 of the County's *Coastal Plan Policies* document.

### **Framework for Planning**

#### **Land Use Element and Local Coastal Program**

This document serves as the Land Use and Circulation Element of the General Plan for the County's coastal zone. It provides a framework for County decisions on land use, development, and circulation. General Goal No. 12.c encourages better access to the coast through the acquisition and development of coastal accessways, trails, and parks, in appropriate locations. *Framework for Planning* identifies areas within the coastal zone where shoreline access is important. Coastal Access is a use to be encouraged in all land use categories.

## **Framework for Planning - Allowable Uses**

Coastal Accessways are a principally permitted use in all land use categories in the Coastal Zone. Principally permitted uses are both allowable and encouraged.

## **Framework for Planning - Definitions**

Framework for Planning provides the following definition of Coastal Accessways as a land use category:

### **Coastal Accessways [C3]**

Land areas, pathways and improvements that may be used for access to the shoreline or other coastal resource such as a stream. They may include pathways, trails, overlooks and may be improved or unimproved. Typical improvements may include parking, lighting, structural improvements such as retaining walls, stairs, signs, picnic tables and restrooms.

## **North Coast Area Plan**

### **Land Use Element and Local Coastal Program**

An area plan contains both policies and implementation measures focused on a specific geographic area and/or community. The North Coast Area Plan describes County land use and circulation goals, policies, programs, and standards for the North Coast Planning Area. In the event that a policy or ordinance elsewhere in the Local Coastal Program conflicts with an area plan standard, the area plan standard shall prevail. This Community Plan is intended to replace and update those sections of the current North Coast Area Plan relating to the urban and village areas of Cambria and San Simeon Acres.

## **Coastal Plan Policies**

### **Land Use Element and Local Coastal Plan**

This document states the policy commitment of the County to implement the mandates of the Coastal Act. Coastal Plan Policies apply to all four coastal zone areas in San Luis Obispo County - the North Coast, Estero, San Luis Bay, and South County. Chapter 2 of the Coastal Plan Policies document outlines shoreline access policies and issues related to shoreline access for each of the four coastal planning areas in the county.

## **Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance (CZLUO)**

This document implements Land Use Element and Local Coastal Plan policies and contains procedures for review and evaluation of proposed land uses and land divisions, similar to a zoning ordinance. While the *Framework for Planning* identifies where specific uses may be

established, the CZLUO determines how such uses may be developed by specifying performance criteria which proposed uses must satisfy in order to receive approval. Section 23.04.420 of the Coastal Zone Land Use Ordinance outlines requirements for protection and provision of coastal access. The ordinance specifies the type of required access, procedures for acquisition, and the type and extent of required improvements.

